

22
*The BLESSEDNESS of Dying
in the LORD consider'd.*

A
Funeral Sermon,
Occasion'd by the
D E A T H
O F

Mrs. Anne Myonnet,

PREACH'D

At *Salters-Hall*, Sept. the
12th, 1725.

By JOHN MYONNET.

L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN CLARK and RICHARD HETT,
at the *Bible and Crown* in the *Poultry*, near
• *Cheapside*. 1725. Price 6d.

The Baroness of ...
in the ...

A

Funeral Sermon

Delivered by the

D. E. A. H.

O

Mrs. ...

MUSEUM

At ...

...

...


...

...

TO

My Honoured FATHER,
Mr. JOHN MYONNET.

Honoured SIR,

 *T*he Desire of several Gentlemen, I have publish'd this Discourse, and do now most humbly present it to You. The Occasion of it is mournful and affecting; the Loss of a most valuable Relative: But it is the Lord's doing, and we must lay our Hand upon our Mouth: As he gives, so he takes away at his Pleasure, and there is no disputing against him.

Humane Nature indeed is apt to rise against such Dispensations of Providence, and to break forth into unseemly Complaints: but if we call in our Reason and our Religion to assist us, these will restrain the swelling Passion, and speak Peace to our troubled Minds; These will teach us, that tho we cannot always discern the Reasons of God's Actions, there is nevertheless a Mixture of Wisdom and

The Dedication.

Goodness in all of them : For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men ; and he is faithful who hath promised, that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

That God would sanctify our present Affliction, and cause it to produce in us the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness : That he would long continue you, as you have hitherto been, a Blessing to your Family : That as he hath been the Guide and Counsellor of your Youth, he would likewise be the Stay and Support of your advancing Years : And that when he shall have satisfy'd you with long Life, he would crown you with Salvation ; Is the sincere Prayer of

Your most Dutiful Son,

JOHN MYONNET.

A

Funeral Sermon, &c.

R E V. XIV. 13.

And I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours; and their Works do follow them.



Have made choice of these Words for the Subject of our present Meditations, as fuitable to that sad Providence which hath brought me hither: It is but a few Days since I attended a much honour'd and dear Parent to her Grave: It is a hard Task that is assign'd me, to speak upon this sorrowful Occasion; but I expect my Support from Heaven, from whence the Voice

B

came

6 *A Funeral Sermon.*

came which pronounc'd our Text : *And I heard a Voice from Heaven, &c.*

These Words, in their primary Intention, were spoken for the Consolation of the Church under the Persecution of Antichrist, for their faithful adherence to the Lamb : And so they refer to the noble Army of Martyrs, who have resisted unto Blood, and suffer'd Death for the Name and Profession of Christ. — But I shall take the Liberty to consider them in a more general Way ; and so they contain a Declaration of the happy Estate of all good Men after Death, as well Saints as Martyrs : for *precious in the Sight of the Lord is the Death of his Saints ; and, Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, &c.* These Words are introduced with great Solemnity, to raise our Attention, and to shew the Importance of the Message contain'd in 'em. *I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth :* And that we might not doubt of the Truth of this Relation, it is confirm'd to us by the unerring Testimony of the Spirit of Truth, *Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours ; and their Works do follow them.*

In the handling of this Subject I shall observe the following Method.

First,

A Funeral Sermon.

7

First, I shall shew what it is to *die in the Lord*.

Secondly, Wherein the Blessedness of such as *die in the Lord* doth consist: the Text tells us, *That they rest from their Labours; and their Works do follow them*.

Thirdly, When it is this Blessedness is to commence: *Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth*: That is, immediately after death.

Fourthly, I shall apply the whole in a few Inferences.

First, I shall shew what it is to *die in the Lord*. Now here it will be proper to observe, that to be in Christ, is an Expression which frequently occurs in the Writings of the *New Testament*, and imports our being united to him by Faith, and becoming Members of his Mystical Body; our Submission to him as our Lord and Saviour, and our entire Conformity to the Rules and Precepts of his holy Religion: and accordingly, to *die in the Lord* must signify, to die in the Quality and Condition of a sincere Disciple and Follower of the Lord, after a Life devoted to his Honour, and spent in his Service; to such an one to live is Christ, and to die is gain: Whether he liveth, he liveth to the Lord, and whether

8 *A Funeral Sermon.*

he dieth, he dieth to the Lord: While he lives he is the Object of his Care; and when he dies, his Arms are open to receive him: He cannot be miserable in this World, nor fail of Happiness in the other; for *the Righteous hath hope in his death* *; and *there is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit* †. The good Man may take to himself Words upon this Occasion, and say with holy David, Ps. xxiii. *He restoreth my Soul, he leadeth me in the Paths of righteousness for his Names sake: Tea, tho I walk thro the Valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me. Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the Days of my Life: And I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.* Or, as he speaks in another Place: *Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory* ††. If therefore we would be capable of this Privilege of dying in the Lord, we must first live to him, and walk in all his Commandments and Ordinances blameless: We must take him for our Guide, and faithfully tread in his Steps: We must be careful that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him; and then we may possess our Souls in patience,

* Prov. xiv. 32.

† Rom. viii. 1.

†† Ps. lxxiii. 4.

and

A Funeral Sermon. 9

and rejoice in the hope of Glory ; *for blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.*

This is the Death which all Men desire to die ; but too many will not be at the pains of an holy Life to prepare themselves for it : they would live all their Lives long in the Gratification of their Appetites, and the Enjoyment of sensual Pleasures ; and when these fail them, they would be taken into the Favour of God, and die in the Embraces of Jesus. It was thus with *Balaam*, who loved the Wages of unrighteousness, *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his**. But such have no Part or Lot in this Matter, and there remains for 'em nothing but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, that shall consume them as Adversaries. The Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God : The Promise of the Life to come is confined to them that live godly, righteously, and soberly in this ; and they are the rich in good Works, who *lay up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life†*. How necessary therefore are the Exercises of Piety and Virtue in our life-time, in order to a happy and comfortable death ? And how shall we

* Numb. xxiii. 10.

† 1 Tim. 6, 19.

deceive our selves, if we expect to be happy upon any other Terms ? 'Tis not a few sad Thoughts of Sin, and a few good Purposes upon a Death-bed ; 'tis not a deep Sigh, nor a flowing Tear at the last Gasps, that will abolish our Guilt, and procure us an Admission into the heavenly Felicity. No ; they who live in an habitual Disobedience to the divine Laws, and never think of the Errors of their Ways till they can no longer pursue 'em, do run a most desperate Hazard, if they are not under a Necessity of dying in their Sins. And with what confidence, after this, can they recommend their dying Spirits to the Redeemer of Mankind, and rely upon him for Salvation ? Hear the severe but just Answer he returns to such Sinners : *I never knew you ; depart from me ye that work Iniquity* *. But he that walketh uprightly, walketh more surely : *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the End of that Man is Peace* †. He knows in whom he hath believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep that which he hath committed to him against that Day : He can appeal to the Searcher and Judge of all Hearts, for the Sincerity and Constancy of his Obedience, and joyfully expect his glorious Appearing ; he saith with St. Paul, *I have fought a*

* Matt. vii. 23.

† Psal. xxxvii. 37.

A Funeral Sermon. 11

good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day. Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord. I proceed in the*

Second place to consider, Wherein the Blessedness of them that die in the Lord doth consist; the Text tells us, They rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.

First, *They rest from their Labours.* This World is the Theatre of Inconstancy and Unhappiness, the Scenes are ever changing, and every new Appearance of Things is big with some new Labour and Trouble. 'Tis the Observation of *Eliphaz* in the Book of *Job*, that *Man is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward†.* And the Psalmist tells us, *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all††.* *They rest from their Labours.* Now there are some Labours and Sufferings which are common to all Men while they are in this *Valley of Tears*, and there are others which are the peculiar Lot

* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.
xxxiv. 19.

† Job v. 7.

†† Psal.

12 *A Funeral Sermon.*

of the good Christian : I shall a little explicate this Matter.

1st, There are some Labours and Sufferings which are common to all Men, while they are in this *Valley of Tears* : We no sooner come into the World but we discover our Uneasiness in Cries and Tears, and our whole Life after is nothing else but a Succession of Labour and Sorrow ; Deep calleth unto Deep, until all the Waves and the Billows are gone over us. How many Crosses and Disappointments attend us even in our Childhood, which vex and disquiet our Souls, and make us long for the more mature and advanced State of Reason and Manhood, wherein we promise to our selves the Enjoyment of Repose and Happiness ? But when we arrive at this State, we are forc'd into the Cares and Fatigues of Life, and find our Uneasinesses increas'd upon us ; whereupon we enlarge our Desires, and fondly place the Scene of our Happiness at a greater distance : but after we have gain'd this Point too, we are as far from being happy as we were before. And thus we go on pursuing a flying Shadow, and inherit nothing but Disappointment and Vexation, till the Days of Darkness overtake us, and we lie down in the Dust, where the weary are at rest. There is no Condition of our Lives that is exempt from Cares and Uneasiness. Is our Condition poor and mean ? what Toil must

we

A Funeral Sermon. 13

we undergo for a comfortable Subsistence? We rise early and sit up late, and devise Schemes upon our Beds; and perhaps after all this Fatigue, are forc'd to eat the Bread of Sorrows, and drink our Water with Carefulness. Others thrive and prosper round about us, to the Admiration of the Beholders, and almost without any Thought or Design of their own; whilst the Hand of Providence seems to be set against us, and we are accounted as its Enemy. We wade against the Violence of the Stream, which mocks our weak Endeavours; and do no sooner extricate our selves out of one difficulty, but another encounters us. We may apply here the Words of *Solomon*; *What hath Man of all his Labour, and of the Vexation of his Heart wherein he hath laboured under the Sun? For all his Days are Sorrows, and his Travel Grief; yea, his Heart taketh not rest in the Night* *.

And supposing our Hands have gotten much, shall we find more Ease and Contentment than we did before? No: For our Cares increase with our Substance, and the Abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to sleep. Riches are very uncertain and fading Things; we cannot possess them

* Eccl. ii. 22, 23.

14 *A Funeral Sermon.*

without Trouble, and we are in continual danger of losing them; *They make to themselves Wings, and fly away*: Or, if they do not speedily leave us, we shall leave them; for they cannot deliver us from Death, nor can we take any thing of our Labour which we may carry away with us. Besides, could we possess them as long as we desir'd, what good is there to the Owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their Eyes? At best they are flattering and insinuating Evils, they expose us to Temptations, and draw us into Mischief; and there is need of uncommon Care and Caution, that we may keep ourselves from being entangled and defiled by them.

Or are we advanced to Honours and Dignity? What saith the Psalmist? *Surely Men of high Degree are a Lye: To be laid in the Balance they are altogether lighter than Vanity**: That is, their Greatness is nothing but a false Appearance, there is nothing solid in all their Magnificence and Splendor, neither are they without their peculiar Cares. Oftentimes they are the Envy of the inferior Croud, and by their exalted Ståtion become a fairer Mark for Obloquy, and are expos'd to greater Perils.

* Psal. lxii. 9.

A Funeral Sermon. 15

They hang upon the Brink of the Precipice, and are not one moment in Security : For Man that is in honour continueth not ; sometimes he sees his Glory pass away before him, and finds himself reduc'd from his high Pre-eminence and Power, to the low Rank of Inferiority and Subjection ; his mighty Lustre dwindles into Obscurity, and the Multitude of his Admirers know him no more. If not, he is sure to be stript of all at the Borders of the Grave, and to go out of this World as naked as he came into it.

Nor shall we find our selves happier in the midst of the Comforts and Pleasures of Life, for even these are tempered with some secret Uneasinesses, which check and damp them ; like Roses they are beset with Thorns, and wound us in the very Enjoyment ; they are purchas'd at a dear rate, and when we have obtain'd them we repent of our Bargain. 'Tis the Confession of the Wise Man, who had tasted all the Pleasures this World could afford, *I said of Laughter, it is mad ; and of Mirth, What does it * ?* The most exquisite Delights here below are unsatisfying in their Nature, and scarce ever fail to issue in Heaviness or Remorse.

* Eccl. ii. 2.

16 *A Funeral Sermon.*

To go one Step farther : We shall not succeed much better if we look for Happiness in Wisdom and Knowledge ; for tho Wisdom is a very excellent and useful Thing, yet considering how difficult and painful the Researches after it usually are, and how small a Portion of it it is we can attain to, after our utmost Labour and Study, we may say with *Solomon*, *In much Wisdom is much Grief ; and he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow* *. And suppose that we understood all Knowledge, were well acquainted with the Secrets of Nature and the Mysteries of Art, could sound the Depths of Policy, and recount the Histories of all Times ; yet how unsatisfactory would all this be to us, whenever the melancholy Thought return'd, That we must soon return to the Earth, and in that very Day our Thoughts perish ? *For as it happeneth to the Fool, so it happeneth even to the Wise, and there is no more remembrance of the Wise than of the Fool for ever : Seeing that which now is in the Days to come shall be forgotten : and how dieth the wise Man ? as the Fool* †. *This also is Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit.*

* Eccl. i. 18.

† Eccl. ii. 15, 16.

A Funeral Sermon. 17

But besides all these, there are a thousand other Evils that combine to give us disturbance, and imbitter the present Life. How often are we tortured with Pains, and consumed with Diseases? The Sorrows of Death compass us about, and the Pains of Hell get hold upon us; we water our Couch with Tears, and all the Night long our Bed is made to swim; we are bowed down greatly, and go mourning all the Day long. Sometimes we fall into the Hands of an oppressing Enemy, and sometimes our Kinsfolk fail us, and our familiar Friends are estranged from us; sometimes we have the Unhappiness to be persecuted with Invectives and Reproaches, our dearest Treasure is trampled under Foot, and perhaps our only Glory, as well as our greatest, turned into Shame: And sometimes we are afflicted with the Loss of our dearest Friends and nearest Relatives; Lover and Friend are removed far from us, and our Acquaintance into darkness, and we are left desolate as the Pelican in the Desert; and oftentimes we adopt the Afflictions and Distresses of others, weeping with them that weep, and mourning with them that mourn; and thus are pierced thro with many foreign Sorrows.

2dly,

18 *A Funeral Sermon.*

2dly, There are other Labours which are peculiar to the good Christian. He treads on Snares, and is furrounded with alluring and powerful Temptations; he wrestles with Flesh and Blood, and endures the Contradiction of Sinners; he maintains a continual War with invisible Foes, ever watchful to deceive, and mighty to destroy. He laments the Weakness of the Flesh, and sometimes the Unwillingness of the Spirit; he complains of the Deceitfulness of his Heart, and the Law in his Members, which warreth against the Law that is in his Mind, and striveth to bring him into Captivity to the Law of Sin and Death: so that when he would do Good, Evil is present with him. It is his desire to serve the Law of God, after the *inward Man*; but when he sets about it, he finds his Heart dull and heavy, or the Cares of the World breaking in upon him, which corrupt his good Performances, as well as rob him of the Comfort of them. He frequently tries to ascend above the World, and enjoy Communion with God; but, alas, his Corruptions still cleave to him, and clog his aspiring Motions; and for this he mourns in secret, and is exceedingly troubled; he cries out with St. Paul, *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the Body of*

A Funeral Sermon. 19

of this Death * ! And who can express the Disquietness of his Spirit, when he remembers his many Transgressions, or number the Tears he sheds upon this account ? Mine Iniquities are increased over my Head, as an heavy Burden ; they are too heavy for me ; he weepeth sore in the Night, and poureth out Rivers of Water ; he is asham'd to lift up his Face towards Heaven ; he abhorreth himself, and repents in Dust and Ashes. And sometimes he imagineth he is the chief of Sinners, and is ready to conclude that God hath utterly forsaken him ; which gives him occasion to expostulate in the Words of David, *Why castest thou off my Soul, O God ? Why hidest thou thy Face from me ? Will the Lord cast off for ever ? And will he be favourable no more ? Is his Mercy clean gone ? And doth his Faithfulness fail for evermore ? O restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit* †.

Nor are the Sins of other Men a small Addition to his trouble, he laments them as he laments his own. *I beheld the Transgressors, and was grieved ; because they kept not thy Word. Wo is me, that I*

* Rom. vii. 24.
Psal. li. 12.

† Psal. lxxvii. 7. Psal. lxxxviii. 10.

sojourn in Mesech ; Wo is me, that I dwell in the midst of a People of unclean Lips.

These and the like Evils are our Companions in this Life ; in the other they all cease. There the Wicked cease from troubling, and the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor ; the Grave burys all our Uneasinesses, and silences our Complaints. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former Things are pass'd away, and God shall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes. Now he that duly considers these Things, will find, that it is no small part of the good Christian's Happiness, to rest from the Labours and Sufferings of this Life : *They rest from their Labours.*

2dly, *Their Works do follow them ;* by which may be meant both their Works themselves, and the Reward of them.

1st, Their Works themselves do follow them ; that is to say, their good Works, not their evil : for their Transgressions being forgiven, and their Sins cover'd here below, the Lord imputeth no more Iniquity unto 'em ; all their Errors and Mis-
carriages

A Funeral Sermon. 21

carriages are buried in everlasting oblivion, never to appear more, either in the View of themselves or others. Indeed 'tis the Opinion of some, that they will all be brought upon the Stage in the Last Day; and if they should, they will but administer Occasion to magnify the Mercy of God in forgiving them. 'Tis true, the Sins of the Wicked follow them with all their Aggravations, and in all their Deformity; and never cease to torment them with the most stinging Reflections. But with the Righteous it is not so: When they die, their Sins die with them; but their good Works accompany them into the other World. There they appear before the Throne of God, not with the many Imperfections which attended the Performance of 'em here; for these being done away in the Blood of the Lamb, they are cloth'd with unspotted Brightness and unfading Beauty. There they give evident Testimony to our Fidelity and good Conduct, and yield us unspeakable Satisfaction in the Review. It is Matter of Joy to us now, to find we have sincerely obey'd the divine Will, tho in an imperfect and broken manner: But how will the Pleasure increase, when we shall behold our Works without Spot or Blemish, or any such thing, perfect
D and

22 *A Funeral Sermon.*

and unrepveable in the Sight of God! But this must not be understood, as if our good Works did follow us, to merit any thing from God for us. No: Our Goodness extendeth not unto him; he is the immense Being, and we are Dust and Ashes. He is our Sovereign Lord, and has an indisputable Right to our Services; they are due to him antecedently to the Command, and become rewardable only by virtue of his most gracious Promise. Hence we are taught by our Blessed Saviour, *After ye have done all things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants, we have done no more than it was our Duty to do* *.

There is also another Sense in which *our Works* may be said to follow us, and that is, as they are to become our Employment in Heaven to all Eternity. We cease here, in order to begin again there; but with this happy difference, that what we perform with Labour and Weakness here, we shall perform above in Power and Perfection, and with the same glorious ease wherewith the Sun dispenses the Rays of Light; for when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. We shall

* Luke xvii. 10.

A Funeral Sermon. 23

be swift and unweary'd, as the Angels of God, in doing his Pleasure. The Work of the Saints above and those below, differs only in this: theirs is refined from all Alloy, and exalted beyond the reach or fear of Interruption; and ours is mixt with the Flesh, and encounters with innumerable Lets and Encumbrances: so that we shall not be altogether Strangers to the exalted Exercises of Heaven, when we arrive there, for our Works shall follow us. *And their Works do follow them.*

2dly, The Reward of their Works doth also follow them: Now this, *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*; it is known only to them who enjoy it. We may as easily paint the Sun in its Meridian Brightness, as fully set forth the Blessedness which God hath prepared for them that love him: And the Holy Scriptures seem to want Expressions whereby to represent it to us; it is call'd, *the fulness of Joy, the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, and a Crown of Glory*; nay, *an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. We are told we shall enter into the *New Jerusalem*, that pure and holy City, which hath no

24. *A Funeral Sermon.*

need of the Sun or the Moon to shine in it ; for the Glory of God and the Lamb enlighten it. There we shall be admitted into the Presence of the Supreme Being, the Fountain of all Felicity, to behold his Face and enjoy his Love. Now we *see thro a Glafs darkly*, but then we *shall see him Face to Face*, and be transform'd into his Likeness. He will manifest himself to us, and make us full of Joy with his Countenance : He will shed abroad his Love in our Hearts, and take us into his immediate Embrace ; and we shall repose our Souls on him as the Center of our Desires, and the worthiest Object of our pure and intense Affections.

There we shall behold our glorify'd Redeemer advanced at the right Hand of the Father, above all Principalities and Powers ; and shall sit down with him on his Throne, and partake of his Glory : and then shall that Prayer of his be fulfill'd, *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory, which thou hast given me* †.

There also we shall meet with an innumerable Company of holy Angels, and

† John xvii. 24.

A Funeral Sermon. 25

with the *General Assembly and Church of the First-born, and the Spirits of Just Men made perfect.* We shall acknowledge the kind Offices of our Guardian-Angels, and those good Spirits will rejoice at our safe arrival amongst them; and the Saints with whom we conversed here on Earth with Delight, will ravish us with their Society in Heaven. We shall mutually congratulate each other, and communicate our Joys and Raptures.

We are told too, that we shall know even as we are known. Here we know but in part, and our Ideas and Conceptions of Things are mixt with Obscurity; but then divine Truths shall appear to us in their unveil'd and naked beauty, and our Knowledge be complete and satisfying; then we shall comprehend the sublime Doctrines of the Christian Religion, and discover the excellent Treasures of divine Wisdom. Then we shall be let into the Secrets of God's Counsels, and joyfully contemplate the Harmony of his Attributes in the wonderful Contrivance of our Redemption. Then too, we shall behold the admirable Beauty of his Holiness, and descry the exceeding Height and Depth of his Love. The Divine Essence indeed will still remain an unfathomable Depth to us; for who by searching
can

26 *A Funeral Sermon.*

can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to Perfection? Such Knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain to it. However, this will be so far from diminishing our Happiness, that it will increase our Joy and Admiration. We shall love him for his infinite Excellence, and adore him for his incomprehensible Majesty.

We are told farther, that our Bodies shall be raised out of the Dust, and inspired with immortal Life. They shall become spiritual, and subservient to the most rapturous Exercises of our glorify'd Spirits; they shall shine as the Light, nor be less quick in their Motions: they shall be *fashioned like unto Christ's glorious Body; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive: and as we have born the Image of the earthly, we shall also bear the Image of the heavenly; for this Corruptible must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal must put on Immortality. So when this Corruptible shall have put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall have put on Immortality, then shall be brought to pass the Saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in Victory. O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin,*

A Funeral Sermon. 27

Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This then is the Blessedness of them that die in the Lord; and which I have good Reason to believe my deceased Parent is now enjoying. The Nearness of the Relation there was between us, forbids me to enlarge upon her Character; but my Duty obligeth me to say something.

She was inclin'd to Religion from her Youth, and spent almost her whole Life in the Service of God, and of her Family: She made conscience of discharging the Duties of the several Relations wherein she stood; and nothing griev'd her more, than when she had fail'd in any particular. She was a faithful Wife, a tender Parent, and a kind Friend; and when she lay upon her Death-bed, she could look back with Comfort upon her past Life: She declared to those that were about her, that she was conscious she had sincerely endeavoured to please God: she was sensible, indeed, of many Defects and Imperfections in her Life; but she said, with *St. Paul*, *It is not I that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me.* She

* 1 Cor. xv. 49, &c.

28 *A Funeral Sermon.*

bore her Illness with Christian Patience, and an entire Resignation to the Will of God. She had no Fear of Death; and left the World without Reluctance; for she said she had done with it, and cared for nothing in it. Her Family she committed to God; and hoped they would not depart from him: and the last Sentence which she was capable of uttering, was a short Prayer, wherein she recommended herself to the Mercy of her heavenly Father. And soon after that, she rested from her Labours, and her Works do follow her.

I hasten to shew in the

Third Place, When it is that this Blessedness is to commence.

From henceforth, saith the Text; that is, immediately after Death. There is a Variety of Opinions among Expositors, about the meaning of the original Word, which is here translated *from henceforth*. *Blessed are the Dead, which die in the Lord, from henceforth*; that is, according to some, who die before that great and severe Persecution comes, spoken of in the preceding Part of the Chapter. So Solomon speaks, *I praised the Dead which are already dead, more than the Living which*

A Funeral Sermon. 29

which are yet alive *. And so *Isaiab*, *The Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come* †. But this falls all to the Ground, when we consider that the Text is brought in as a Consolation to them who were to be concern'd in that fiery Trial.

Others translate the Word, *from this time forward*, or from the writing of this Vision; which can hardly be admitted, because it seemeth to exclude from Blessedness all who died in the Lord before.

And there is one Author *, who without any Reason, except it be to support an Hypothesis of the *Romish* Church, refers *from henceforth* to the Day of Judgment.

But the most natural, and therefore the most probable Meaning of the Word, is that which I laid down at my entrance upon this Head; namely, *immediately after Death*. As soon as the good Man hath shaken off this Body, which detains him here, he taketh his Flight unto God his Creator, and remains in a State of Happiness. That which puts an end to his Labours, gives beginning to his Happiness; for to him, Death is nothing else

* Eccl. iv. 2.

† Isai. lvii. 1.

* *Bellarmino.*

30 *A Funeral Sermon.*

but a quick Passage from Earth to Heaven. The good Angels who attend the dying Saint, watch the Moment of his Departure, and presently conduct him to Paradise. It is therefore a Mistake of some Men, to imagine, that the Soul remains in a State of Slumber and Insensibility with the Body, till the last Trump shall sound, and awaken both together : for the Text pronounces them *immediately* blessed, who die in the Lord. And this is the Voice likewise of many other Passages in the Holy Scriptures. In the Parable, our Lord tells us, that when *Lazarus* died, he was convey'd by the Angels into *Abraham's Bosom* *. And when the Thief was expiring upon the Cross, he promiseth him, *this Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise* † : And St. Paul was confident of his being present with the Lord, as soon as ever he should be absent from the Body ‡ : and hence, in another place, he prefers his Departure to a longer Continuance in this Life ; *having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better* **.

Nor is the Church of *Rome* less mistaken in her Doctrine of Purgatory, which is a middle State of Fire of her own In-

* Luke xvi. 22.
** Phil. i. 23.

† Chap. xxiii. 43.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 8.

A Funeral Sermon. 31

vention, for the Purgation of departed Souls, before they can be admitted into Heaven: which having so little Foundation, either in Scripture, or in Reason and common Sense; I shall not stay to confute it, but proceed to the last Part of my Discourse, which is,

Fourthly, To make some Inferences from what hath been said upon this Subject. And,

First, If they are happy who die in the Lord, in that they rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them; then this Consideration may serve to support us under all the Evils and Sufferings of the present State: For tho these things may render our Lives uncomfortable, yet it is not in their Power to make our Death unhappy; because we shall leave them all behind us, when we enter into the other World. Are we poor and despis'd, and persecuted, and tempted; do Pains and Diseases, Disappointments and Losses attend us? it is good that a Man should both hope and quietly wait for the Salvation of God. The happy Hour is coming, every flying Moment brings it nearer, which shall put an everlasting Period to all our Sorrows; and then we shall enter into Peace and

32 *A Funeral Sermon.*

Rest in our Beds, every one walking in his uprightness. And why should we complain of our Sufferings, when they are so soon to have an end, and such Glory is to follow them? Wherefore, let us be sober, and hope unto the End for the Grace that shall be brought unto us, at the Revelation of our Lord and Saviour.

Secondly, From what hath been said, we may observe how little Reason a good Man hath to be afraid of Death. Death, indeed, is terrible to human Nature: *Bildad*, in the Book of *Job*, calls it the King of Terrors. We shrink back, and become pale at its Approach: And even the best of Men have encounter'd this Enemy with trembling: though they know, there is no Man that hath Power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit, and there is no Discharge in that War; yet they desire to decline the Conflict. *St. Paul*, who had been caught up to the third Heaven, and had seen the Glory of the invisible World, doth yet tell us, *we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon; that Mortality might be swallow'd up of Life* *. And

* 2 Cor. v. 4.

A Funeral Sermon. 33

our blessed Lord himself was in an Agony when his hour was near ; and pray'd, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me* †. But tho Death may affright us, yet it cannot do us any real harm ; its Sting is taken away by the Death of Christ ; and it is become a disarmed Enemy, or rather, a reconcil'd Friend. What if Death deprives us of all the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life ? What if it taketh us away from our Wealth, and our Honours, and our Friends ? Are there not better Things prepar'd for us in Heaven, a more enduring Substance, an immortal Crown of Glory, and such endearing Conversation with glorify'd Spirits, as shall abundantly compensate for the Absence of our earthly Friends ? And what if Death doth separate our Souls from our Bodies, shall they not be united again never to part more ? Know we not that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolv'd, we have a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens ? and that while we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord ; and that it is Death that conveys us into his Presence ?

† Matt. xxvi. 39.

34 *A Funeral Sermon.*

Why then should we be afraid of that, which is an inlet to so great a Happiness? It is dishonourable to our great Captain, either to relinquish the Combat, or to faint in the Engagement; for the Difficulty is already past, and we have little more to do, than to triumph with him. Let Nature then submit to the Dominion of Grace; let us seek Strength and Support from above; let us disengage our Thoughts from the Vanities of the World, and often meditate upon the unseen Glories of the future Life; and this will moderate our Fears, and render Death desirable.

3dly, Another Use which we may make of this Subject, is, to moderate our Grief for the Loss of our pious Friends, who rest from their Labours, and whose Works follow them. We may indeed be sensible of our Affliction, and pay the Tribute of Sorrow which we owe to the dear Memory of our departed Friends: But what we are to guard against is Sorrowing, *even as others which have no Hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him**.

* 1st Thess. iv. 13.

A Funeral Sermon. 35

'Tis true, their longer Continuance here might have been serviceable and delightful to us ; but seeing their Work is finish'd, and God hath called them home to receive their Reward, what Folly is it to give way to the Violence of our Passion upon this account, and with *Jacob* to refuse to be comforted, and resolve to go mourning to our Graves ! This is both unmanly and unchristian, it argues a weak Faith in the Promises of God, and shews our unkindness to our deceased Friends for if we loved them, and believed they were happy, we should be so far from desiring their Return, that we should give all diligence to prepare our selves to follow them.

To conclude.

4^{thly}, Let us be Followers of them who thro Faith and Patience inherit the Promises. This is the Command of the Gospel, and to this Intent it is, that we have so many Examples of Piety and Virtue left us on Record. The 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is full of them : They who shine as Lights in the World, ought not to be forgotten when they have left it. The Saints, tho dead, do yet speak to us by their holy Examples ;

36 *A Funeral Sermon.*

amples; and we must walk even as they walk'd, if we expect to be happy with them.

*Which God of his infinite Mercy grant
for the Sake of his only Son Jesus
Christ our Lord, to whom be Glory
for ever and ever.*



F I N I S.